

HOW TO ASSIST YOUNG GIRLS TO WOMANHOOD.

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The primary establishment and the menopausal cessation of menstruation are the two crucial physical epochs of woman's life. The change from maidenhood to womanhood is one that involves the whole body, and manifests itself alike in the form, the voice and the sexual and nervous phenomena. In an ideal state of perfect health this transition into puberty should be as natural and uneventful as gliding from sleep into consciousness. Owing, however, to the present civilized modes of living, the cerebral development of young girls is fostered and forced to a degree that deprives the remaining tissues and organs of their necessary nutrition, and too often we are called upon to treat delicate girls that are like buds blasted in the blossoming. Many a woman traces back a prolonged existence of semi-invalidism to exposure and lack of care at the early menstrual periods. Tight lacing also predisposes to pelvic disorders by interfering with circulation and exciting uterine displacements. The strain of puberty upon the nervous and blood-forming structures may be too great in a subject hereditarily deficient in vital resistance and adaptability. So we may count among the morbid incidents more or less peculiar to puberty, chlorosis and anemias, general debility, neurasthenia and hysteria, acute pneumonic phthisis, chorea and hebephrenia.

According to Emmet, more than half of all women who have suffered at puberty from menstrual derangements are sterile and delicate in after life. Skene has stated that his observations showed that the vast majority of incurable diseases peculiar to women originate in imperfect development and consequent derangement of function. This development is either primary, during the embryonic stage, or secondary, at puberty. Defects in the former are irremediable, whereas secondary deviations from the normal standard are both preventable and curable in most instances.

It is important in connection with the subject under consideration to bear in mind the essential reciprocal relations of the reproductive system and the general organization. As Virchow says, all the specific properties of woman's body and all her womanly characteristics depend upon her ovaries. In other words a woman is not fully a woman unless her sexual development is natural and complete and in line with a healthy general organization. A beautiful illustration of sexual dimorphism has been furnished by Prof. Max Weber (quoted by Skene), who presented the case of a chaffinch in which the left side of the body had the female coloration and the right